

Activities and approaches that support young people to engage with texts and develop skills of understanding, analysis and evaluation

Teaching reading in any subject area involves making explicit the strategies that confident readers apply in order to access a text.

Teachers will support young people to develop reading strategies when learners encounter new and unfamiliar texts. Different strategies can be applied before, during and after reading.

Five, five, one

All group members read the whole text. Through discussion they distil the main ideas from the text and present them in no more than five sentences. Further discussion will enable them to distil the ideas to the five single words that best represent those main ideas. Finally they will reduce the five words down to one word summing up the text as a whole. This task allows young people to support each other to apply the following skills.

- Selecting appropriate reading strategies to read confidently with understanding (e.g. skimming for main ideas, ...)
- Finding and selecting key information
- Understanding main concerns, concepts and or arguments
- Summarising in their own words

Challenge is built in to the task as learners are asked to evaluate and prioritise the main ideas of the text.

Jigsaw

Each group member is assigned responsibility for reading and becoming an ‘expert’ on a section of a text and teaching its content to the rest of the group. They will have the opportunity to discuss their section with other ‘experts’ from other groups in the class. This task encourages young people to develop skills such as:

- selecting appropriate reading strategies to read confidently with understanding
- finding and selecting key information
- understanding main concerns, concepts and or arguments
- summarising in their own words

The original group will gain an understanding of the text as a whole when all group members come back together to teach the group their assigned sections.

The challenge can be increased in this type of activity if each group member is given a different text on a similar topic. When they come back together to teach the content of their text to the rest of the group, young people can develop advanced literacy skills by:

- identifying similarities and differences between the texts
- evaluating the effectiveness of the different texts
- synthesising key ideas from the summaries of each text

Convergent and divergent thinking

As in ‘Jigsaw’, the first part of this task gives each group member responsibility for reading and understanding a section of a given text in order to convey the main ideas to the rest of the group. Again, this will give young people the opportunity to develop skills such as:

- selecting appropriate reading strategies to read confidently with understanding
- finding and selecting key information
- understanding main concerns, concepts and or arguments
- summarising in their own words

Challenge is built in to the second part of the task when learners work together to distil the text down to its main ideas in a small number of bullet points. When these have been recorded, they can then engage in divergent thinking as they discuss and ask each other questions in order to address each of the bullet points. Here, learners will employ their advanced literacy skills by

- asking and answering a range of questions, particularly evaluative questions
- supporting their viewpoint with evidence from the text